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ABSTRACT

From 1986 to 1995, the percentage of Hispanics in elementary and secondary schools increased significantly. However, data continue to show that Hispanic educational attainment levels do not match those of their White and Black peers. Latino children are less likely than their White or Black peers to be enrolled in preprimary education programs, although this gap closes at the kindergarten level, when Hispanic enrollment surpasses even that of Whites. Latinos continue to be underrepresented in gifted and talented education programs, even though their overall enrollment rates have increased over time. In later stages of their academic careers, Hispanic students are more likely than Whites to be retained in grade, and more likely to attend a predominantly minority school. Hispanics are less likely to complete high school and less likely both to be enrolled in college and to complete a degree. (SLD)

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Hispanic Education Fact Sheet

National Council of La Raza

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HISPANIC EDUCATION FACT SHEET

Overview

Latinos are fast becoming a significant proportion of the U.S. student population. From 1986 to 1995 the percentage of Hispanics in elementary and secondary schools significantly increased, while that of White students decreased. The proportion of Black students remained the same during this period. While there has been some improvement in the status of Latino education over the past decade, including modest increases on several key measures, data continue to show that Hispanic educational attainment levels do not match those of their White and Black peers. The gaps in academic progress and achievement between Latinos and other American students remain wide.

Early Childhood Education

Latino children are less likely than their White or Black peers to be enrolled in pre-primary education programs.

- **Hispanic three-year-olds are less likely to be enrolled in pre-primary programs, compared to their White and Black peers.** Among three-year-olds in 1996, only one in five Latinos (22.1%) was enrolled in a pre-primary program, compared to two in five Whites and Blacks (39.6% and 40.5%, respectively).
- **In comparison to their Black and White counterparts, Hispanic four-year olds are less likely to be enrolled in pre-primary programs.** Among four-year-olds in 1996, fewer than half (45.3%) of Latinos were enrolled in pre-primary programs, compared to nearly three-fifths (58.8%) of Whites and nearly seven out of ten (67.8%) Blacks.
- **The gap in enrollment rates closes at the kindergarten level, and the enrollment rate for Latinos surpasses even that of Whites.** Among five-year-olds in 1996, 90.4% of Hispanics and 94.1% of Blacks were enrolled in kindergarten, in comparison to 88.8% of Whites.

Elementary and Secondary Schools

Latinos continue to be underrepresented in gifted and talented education programs, even though their overall enrollment rates have increased over time.

- **Latinos and Blacks are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs in comparison to their White counterparts.** In 1994 (the most recent data available), the elementary and secondary school population of Hispanics reached 12.7%; however, Latinos accounted for only 6.4% of the gifted and talented student population. Similarly, while Blacks made up 16.9% of the elementary and secondary school population, they only accounted for 8.5% of the gifted and talented student population. Conversely, Whites comprised 65.7% of the elementary and secondary school population, but they accounted for 80.2% of the gifted and talented student population.

In the later stages of their academic careers, Hispanics are more likely than Whites to be retained in grade.

- **Among nine-to-11-year-olds, Hispanics tend to be as likely as Whites to be below modal grade (i.e. retained in grade), but less likely than Blacks.** In 1996, 22.6% of Whites and 22.9% of Latinos were below modal grade. By contrast, 29.2% of Blacks were below modal grade.
- **Among 12-to-14-year-olds, Hispanics are more likely than Whites but less likely than Blacks to be retained in grade.** In 1996, among 12-to-14-year-olds, 35.5% of Hispanics and 36.8% of Blacks were below modal grade, compared to 27.6% of Whites.
- **Among 15-to-17-year-olds, Hispanics are more likely than either Blacks or Whites to be below modal grade.** In 1996, almost two in five (39.0%) Latinos were below modal grade. By comparison, more than one-third of Blacks (36.9%) and three in ten (30.1%) Whites were retained in grade.

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Latino segregation has become a serious educational problem.

- **In the past two decades, there has been an increase in Latino enrollment in predominantly minority schools.** Between 1980 and 1995 (the most recent data available), the proportion of Latinos enrolled in predominantly minority schools increased from 68.1% to 74.0%.
- **Latinos experience intense school isolation.** The percentage of Hispanics attending schools in which less than one-tenth of the student population is White (the measure of "intense isolation") increased from 28.8% in 1980 to 34.8% in 1995.
- **Hispanic students' exposure to White students has steadily decreased.** In a measure of Hispanic students' contact and interaction with White students, the percentage of White students in schools attended by typical Hispanic students was 35.5% in 1980. By 1994, that proportion had decreased to 30.6%.

Hispanic are less likely to complete high school.

- **A significantly smaller proportion of Hispanic 25-to-29-year-olds[1] complete high school than their Black and White peers.** In 1997, about three-fifths (61.8%) of Latinos ages 25 to 29 completed high school. By comparison, nine of every ten (86.9% and 92.9%, respectively) Blacks and Whites were high school graduates.
- **Among Hispanic 16-to-24- year-olds, the status dropout rate[2] is higher than that for comparable Blacks and Whites.** In 1996, among 16-to-24-year-olds, the status dropout rate for Latinos was 29.4%, or more than twice that for Blacks (13.0%) and four times that for Whites (7.3%).

Higher Education

Latinos are less likely than Whites or Blacks to be enrolled in college, and less likely to obtain a college degree.

- **Among 18-to-24-year-olds who have completed high school, Latinos are slightly less likely than Blacks and significantly less likely than Whites to be enrolled in college.** In 1996, one-third (33.8%) of Hispanics ages 18 to 24 had completed high school and enrolled in college. A slightly higher percentage of their Black peers (35.7%) continued on to college after high school. By contrast, 45.0% of White high school graduates had enrolled in college.
- **Among 25-to-29-year-olds who have completed high school, Hispanics are as likely as Blacks, and less likely than Whites, to have some college education.**[3] In 1997, among 25-to-29-year-olds who had completed high school, 53.9% of Latinos and 53.7% of Blacks had some college education. That same year, 68.2% of comparable Whites had some college education.
- **Hispanic high school graduates ages 25 to 29 are more likely than Blacks, but less likely than Whites, to have received a Bachelor's degree or higher.** In 1997, 17.8% of Hispanics ages 25 to 29 who had completed high school held a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 16.4% of comparable Blacks. By contrast, twice as many of their White peers (35.2%) were college graduates.

Sources

The Condition of Education 1998, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education; *Digest of Education Statistics 1997*, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education; Gary Orfield, *Deepening Segregation in American Public Schools*, Harvard Project on School Desegregation, April 1997; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, March 1997.

[1] Data on young adults ages 25 to 29 are presented in this fact sheet since this is the population in their prime working years, with the most direct implications for the U.S. labor force and economy.

[2] "Status" dropouts are persons who are not enrolled in school and who are not high school graduates. People who have received GED credentials are counted as graduates. Data are based upon sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutional population.

[3] "Some college" includes those with an associate degree or vocational certificate.

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